Mr Newton

from the Author

A

DISCOURSE, &c.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED TO THE

STUDENTS

OF THE

ROYAL ACADEMY,

ON THE

Distribution of the Prizes, *December* 10, 1778.

BY THE

Reynolds (Sir J.) K.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A

DISCOURSE, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE recommended, in a former Diſcourſe, that Artiſts ſhould learn their profeſſion by endeavouring to form an idea of perfection from the different excellencies, as they lye diſperſed in the various ſchools of Painting. Some difficulty will ſtill occur, to know what is Beauty, and where it may be found; one would wiſh not to be obliged to take it intirely on the credit of fame, though to this, I acknowledge, the younger Students muſt unavoidably ſubmit. Any ſuſpicion in them of the chance

of their being deceived, will have more tendency to obſtruct their advancement, than even an enthuſiaſtic confidence in the perfection of their models. But to the more advanced in the Art, who wiſh to ſtand on more ſtable and firmer ground, and to eſtabliſh principles on a ſtronger foundation than authority, however venerable or powerful, it may be ſafely told, that there is ſtill a higher tribunal, to which thoſe great Maſters themſelves muſt ſubmit, and to which indeed every excellence in Art muſt be ultimately referred. He, who is ambitious to enlarge the boundaries of his Art, muſt extend his views beyond the precepts which are found in books, or to be drawn from the practice of his predeceſſors, to a knowledge of thoſe precepts in the mind, to thoſe operations of intellectual nature, to which every thing that aſpires to pleaſe, muſt be proportioned and accommodated.

Poetry having a more extenſive power than our Art, exerts its influence over almoſt all the paſſions; amongſt thoſe may be reckoned one of our moſt prevalent diſpoſitions, anxiety for the future. Poetry operates by raiſing our curioſity, engaging the mind by degrees to take an intereſt in the event, keeping that event ſuſpended, and ſurprizing at laſt with an unexpected cataſtrophe.

The Painter's Art is more confined, and has nothing that correſponds, or perhaps is equivalent to this power and advantage of leading the mind on, till attention is totally engaged. What is done by Painting, muſt be done at one blow; curioſity has received at once all the ſatisfaction it can ever have. There are, however, other intellectual qualities and diſpoſitions which the Painter can ſatisfy and affect as powerfully as the Poet; amongſt thoſe we may reckon our love of novelty, variety, and contraſt; theſe qualities, on examination, will be found to refer to a certain activity and reſtleſſneſs, which has a pleaſure and delight in being exerciſed and put in motion; Art therefore only adminiſters to thoſe wants and deſires of the mind.

It requires no long diſquiſition to ſhow, that the diſpoſitions which I have ſtated actually ſubſiſt in the human mind. Variety reanimates the attention which is apt to languiſh under a continual ſameneſs. Novelty makes a more forcible impreſſion on the mind, than can be done by repreſentation of what we have often ſeen before; and contraſts rouſe the power of compariſon by oppoſition. All this is obvious; but, on the other hand, it muſt be remembered, that the mind, though an active principle, has likewiſe a diſpoſition to indolence; and though it loves exerciſe,

erciſe, loves it only to a certain degree, beyond which it is very unwilling to be led, or driven; theſe qualities therefore may be carried to exceſs. When variety entirely deſtroys the pleaſure proceeding from uniformity and repetition, and when novelty counteracts, and ſhuts out the pleaſure ariſing from old habits and cuſtoms, oppoſes too much the indolence of our diſpoſition; the mind therefore can bear with pleaſure but a ſmall portion of novelty at a time. The main part of the work muſt be in the mode to which we have been uſed; an affection to old habits and cuſtoms I take to be the predominant diſpoſition of the mind, and that novelty comes as an exception; where all is novelty, the attention, the exerciſe of the mind is too violent.

Contrast, in the ſame manner, when it exceeds certain limits, is as diſagreeable as a violent and perpetual oppoſition; it gives to the ſenſes in their progreſs, a more ſudden change than they can bear with pleaſure.

It is then apparent, that thoſe qualities, however they contribute to the perfection of Art, when kept within certain bounds, if they are carried to exceſs, become defects, and require correction; a work then will not proceed

better

better and better as it is more varied; variety can never be the ground-work and principle of the performance, it muſt be only employed to recreate and relieve.

To apply theſe general obſervations, which belong equally to all Arts, to ours in particular. In a compoſition, when the objects are ſcattered and divided into many equal parts, the eye is perplexed and fatigued from not knowing where to reſt, where to find the principal action, or which is the principal figure; for where all are making equal pretenſions to notice, all are in equal danger of neglect.

The expreſſion which is uſed very often on theſe occaſions is, the piece wants *repoſe*; a word which perfectly expreſſes a relief of the mind from that ſtate of hurry and anxiety which it ſuffers, when looking at a work of this character.

On the other hand, abſolute Unity; that is, a large work, conſiſting of one groupe or maſs of light only, would be as defective as an heroic poem without epiſode, or any collateral incidents to recreate the mind with that variety which it always requires.

Two inſtances occur to me of two Painters, (Rembrant and Pouſſin) of characters totally oppoſite to each other in every reſpect, but in nothing more than in their mode of compoſition and management of light and ſhadow. Rembrant's manner is abſolute Unity; he often has but one groupe, and exhibits little more than one ſpot of light in the midſt of a large quantity of ſhadow; if he has a ſecond maſs, that ſecond bears no proportion to the principal.

Poussin, on the contrary, has ſcarce any principal maſs of light at all, and his figures are often too much diſperſed, without ſufficient attention to place them in groupes.

The conduct of thoſe two Painters is entirely the reverſe of what might be expected from their general ſtile and character; the works of Pouſſin being as much diſtinguiſhed for ſimplicity, as thoſe of Rembrant for combination. Even this conduct of Pouſſin might proceed from too great an affection to ſimplicity of *another kind*; too great a deſire to avoid that oſtentation of art, with regard to light and ſhadow, on which Rembrant ſo much wiſhed to draw the attention; however, each of them ran into contrary extremes, and it is difficult to determine which is the moſt

reprehenſible,

reprehenſible, both being equally diſtant from the demands of Nature, and the purpoſes of Art. The ſame juſt moderation muſt be obſerved in regard to ornaments; nothing will contribute more to deſtroy Repoſe than Profuſion, of whatever kind, whether it conſiſts in the multiplicity of objects, or the variety and brightneſs of colours.

On the other hand, a work without ornament, inſtead of ſimplicity, to which it makes pretenſions, has rather the appearance of poverty. The degree to which ornaments are admitted, muſt be regulated by the profeſſed ſtile of the work; but we may be ſure of this truth, that the moſt ornamental ſtile requires Repoſe to ſet off even its ornaments to advantage. I cannot avoid mentioning here an inſtance of repoſe in that faithful and accurate painter of nature Shakeſpear; the ſhort dialogue between Duncan and Banquo, whilſt they are approaching the gates of Macbeth's caſtle. Their converſation very naturally turns upon the beauty of its ſituation, and the pleaſantneſs of the air; and Banquo obſerving the martlets neſts in every receſs of the corniſh, remarks, that where thoſe birds moſt breed and haunt, the air is delicate. The ſubject of this quiet and eaſy converſation gives that repoſe ſo neceſſary to the mind, after the more tumultuous buſtle of the preceding

ſcenes,

ſcenes, and perfectly contraſts the ſcene of horror that immediately ſucceeds. It ſeems as if Shakeſpear aſked himſelf, What is a Prince likely to ſay to his attendants on ſuch an occaſion? Whereas the modern writers ſeem, on the contrary, to be always ſearching for new thoughts, ſuch as never could occur to men in that ſituation. This is alſo frequently the practice of Homer, who, from the midſt of battles and horrors, relieves and refreſhes the mind of the reader, by introducing ſome quiet rural image, or picture of familiar domeſtic life. The writers of every age and country, where taſte has begun to decline, paint and adorn every object they touch; are always on the ſtretch; never deviate or ſink a moment from the pompous and the brilliant. Lucan, Statius, and Claudian, (as a learned critic obſerved) are examples of this bad taſte and want of judgment, they never ſoften their tones, or condeſcend to be natural; all is exaggeration and perpetual ſplendor, without affording repoſe of any kind.

As we are ſpeaking of exceſſes, it will not be remote from our purpoſe to ſay a few words upon Simplicity; which, in one of the ſenſes in which it is uſed, is conſidered as the general corrector of exceſs; we ſhall at preſent forbear to conſider it as implying that exact conduct

proceeding

proceeding from an intimate knowledge of ſimple unadulterated nature, as it is then only another word for Perfection, which neither ſtops ſhort of, nor overſteps reality and truth.

In our enquiry after Simplicity, as in many other enquires of this nature, we can beſt explain what is right, by ſhewing what is wrong; and, indeed, in this caſe it ſeems to be abſolutely neceſſary, Simplicity being only a negative Virtue, cannot be deſcribed or defined. We muſt therefore explain its nature, and ſhew the advantage and beauty which is derived from it, by ſhewing the deformity which proceeds from its neglect.

Though inſtances of this neglect might be expected to be found in the practice, we ſhould not expect to find in the works of critics, precepts that bid defiance to Simplicity, and every thing that relates to it. Du Piles recommends to us Portrait Painters, to add Grace and Dignity to the characters of thoſe, whoſe Pictures we draw; ſo far he is undoubtedly right, but, unluckily, he deſcends to particulars, and gives his own idea of Grace and Dignity. *If*, ſays he, *you draw perſons of high Character and Dignity, they ought to be drawn in ſuch an attitude, that the Portrait muſt*

ſeem to ſpeak to us of themſelves, and, as it were, to ſay to us, "*ſtop, take notice of me, I am that invincible King, ſurrounded with majeſty:*" "*I am that valiant commander, who ſtruck terror every where:*" "*I am that great miniſter who knew all the ſprings of politicks:*" "*I am that magiſtrate of conſummate wiſdom and probity.*" He goes on in this manner, with all the characters he can think on. We may contraſt the tumour of this preſumptuous loftineſs, with the natural unaffected air of the portraits of Titian, where dignity ſeeming to be natural and inherent, draws ſpontaneous reverence, and inſtead of being thus vainly aſſumed, has the appearance of an unalienable adjunct; whereas ſuch pompous and laboured inſolence of grandeur is ſo far from creating reſpect, that it betrays vulgarity and meanneſs, and new-acquired conſequence.

The Painters, many of them at leaſt, have not been backward in adopting the ideas contained in thoſe precepts. The portraits of Rigaud are perfect examples of an implicit obſervance of thoſe rules of Du Piles; ſo that though he was a Painter of great merit in many reſpects, yet, that merit is intirely overpowered by a total abſence of Simplicity in every ſenſe.

Not to multiply inſtances, which might be produced for this purpoſe, from the works of Hiſtory Painters, I ſhall mention only one, a Picture which I have ſeen, of the Supreme Being, by Coypell.

This ſubject the Roman Catholic Painters have taken the liberty to repreſent, however indecent the attempt, and however obvious the impoſſibility of any approach to an adequate repreſentation: but here the air and character, which the Painter has given, and he has doubtleſs given the higheſt he could conceive, are ſo degraded by the idea of dignity, ſuch as Du Piles has recommended, that one is enraged at the folly and preſumption of the Painter, and conſiders it as little leſs than profanation.

As we have paſſed to a neighbouring nation for inſtances of want of Simplicity; we muſt acknowledge, at the ſame time, they have produced great examples of it in Pouſſin and Le Seur. But as we are ſpeaking of the moſt refined and ſubtle idea of perfection, may we not enquire, whether a curious eye cannot diſcern ſome faults, even in thoſe great men? I can fancy, that even Pouſſin, by abhorring that affectation, and that want of

Simplicity,

Simplicity, which he obſerved in his countrymen, has, in certain particulars, fallen into the contrary extreme, ſo far as to approach to a kind of affectation, to what, in writing, would be called Pedantry.

When Simplicity, inſtead of being a corrector, ſeems to ſet up for herſelf; that is, when an Artiſt ſeems to value himſelf ſolely upon this quality; ſuch an oſtentatious diſplay of Simplicity becomes then as diſagreeable and nauſeous as any other kind of affectation; yet he is, in this caſe, likely enough to ſit down contented with his own work, for though he finds the world look at it with indifference or diſlike, as being deſtitute of every quality that can recreate, or give pleaſure to the mind; yet he conſoles himſelf, that it has Simplicity, a beauty of too pure and chaſte a nature, to be reliſhed by vulgar minds.

It is in Art as in Morals, no character would inſpire us with an enthuſiaſtic admiration of his virtue, if that virtue conſiſted only in an abſence of vice; ſomething more is required; a man muſt do more than merely his duty to be a hero.

Those

THOSE works of the Antients, which are in the higheſt eſteem, have ſomething beſides mere Simplicity to recommend them. The Apollo, the Venus, the Laacoon, the Gladiator, have a certain Compoſition of Action, have contraſts ſufficient to give grace and energy in a high degree; but it muſt be confeſſed of the many thouſand antique ſtatues which we have, that their general characteriſtic is bordering at leaſt on inanimate inſipidity.

SIMPLICITY, when ſo very inartificial as to ſeem to evade the difficulties of Art, is a very ſuſpicious virtue.

I DO not want to degrade Simplicity from the high eſtimation in which it has been ever juſtly held. It is our barrier againſt that great enemy to truth and nature, Affectation, which is ever clinging to the pencil, and ready to drop in and poiſon every thing it touches; our love and affection to Simplicity, proceeds in a great meaſure from our averſion to every kind of affectation.

THERE is likewiſe another reaſon why ſo much ſtreſs is laid upon this virtue, the propenſity which Artiſts have to fall into the contrary extreme; we therefore ſet a guard on that ſide that is moſt aſſailable. When a young

Artiſt is firſt told that his compoſition and his attitudes muſt be contraſted, that he muſt turn the head contrary to the poſition of the body, in order to produce grace and animation; that his outline muſt be unadulating, and ſwelling, to give grandeur; and that the eye muſt be gratified with a variety of colours. When he is told this with certain animating words, of Spirit, Dignity, Energy, Grace, greatneſs of Stile, and brilliancy of Tints, he becomes ſuddenly vain of his new acquired knowledge, and never thinks he can carry thoſe rules too far. It is then that the aid of Simplicity is called in, to correct the exuberance of youthful ardor.

The ſame may be ſaid in regard to Colouring, which in its pre-eminence is particularly applied to fleſh. An Artiſt in his firſt eſſay of imitating nature, would make the whole maſs of one colour, as the oldeſt Painters did; till he is taught to obſerve not only the variety of Tints, which are in the object itſelf, but the differences produced by the gradual decline of light to ſhadow: he then immediately puts his inſtruction in practice, and introduces a variety of diſtinct colours.

He muſt then be again corrected, and told, that though there is this variety, yet the effect of the whole upon the eye,

eye, muſt have the union and Simplicity of the colouring of nature.

And here we may obſerve, that the progreſs of an individual Student, bears a great reſemblance to the progreſs and advancement of the Art itſelf. Want of Simplicity would probably be not one of the defects of an Artiſt who had ſtudied nature only, as it was not of the old maſters, who lived in the time preceeding the great Art of Painting; on the contrary, their works are too ſimple and too inartificial.

The Art in its infancy, like the firſt work of a Student, was dry, hard, and ſimple. But this kind of barbarous Simplicity, would be better named Penury, as it proceeds from mere want; from want of knowledge, want of reſources, want of abilities to be otherwiſe; their Simplicity is the offspring not of choice, but neceſſity.

In the ſecond ſtage they were ſenſible of this poverty, and thoſe who were the moſt ſenſible of the want, were the beſt judges of the meaſure of the ſupply. There were Painters who emerged from poverty without falling into luxury. Their ſucceſs induced others, who, probably never

never would of themſelves have had ſtrength of mind to diſcover the original defect to endeavour at the remedy by an abuſe, and ran into the contrary extreme. But however they may have ſtrayed, we cannot recommend to them to return to that Simplicity which they have juſtly quitted; but to deal out their abundance with a more ſparing hand, with that dignity that makes no parade, either of its riches, or of its art. It is not eaſy to give a rule which may ſerve to fix this juſt and correct medium; becauſe, when we may have fixed, or nearly fixed, the middle point, taken as a general principle, circumſtances may oblige us to depart from it, either on the ſide of Simplicity, or on that of Variety and Decoration.

It is the knowledge of thoſe powers and faculties of our nature, to which Art addreſſes itſelf, that will enable the Artiſt to diſtinguiſh between thoſe rules that require implicit obedience, and thoſe which are of leſs conſequence, and may be more eaſily diſpenſed with.

To diſtinguiſh in what the ſpirit of each rule conſiſts; and amongſt the difficulties of the Art from which this knowledge muſt extricate him, may be reckoned the nice judgment required to chooſe the leaſt evil, when an

Artiſt

Artiſt finds himſelf in that ſituation, that whatever he does muſt be in a certain degree wrong.

I NEED not here recommend to the Artiſt the excluſion of beauties which belong to another ſtile, as I have already enlarged on this ſubject in a former diſcourſe, ſpeaking of the difference between the Roman and Venetian ſchools: I will only obſerve now, in order to refer it to the preſent purpoſe, that we expect to find in Art, what we find in life and manners, a uniformity of character.

BEFORE I ſpeak of the different importance of rules, I cannot avoid mentioning one rule, which indeed may be ſaid to comprehend all the reſt, the importance of pleaſing at firſt ſight; a Painter produces his work in vain if it does not invite attention.

I THOUGHT it neceſſary in a former diſcourſe, ſpeaking of the difference of the ſublime and ornamental ſtile of Painting, in order to excite your attention to the more manly, noble, and dignified manner, to leave perhaps an impreſſion too contemptuous of thoſe ornamental parts of our Art, for which many have valued themſelves, and many works are much valued and eſteemed.

I SAID then, what I thought it was right at that time to ſay, I ſuppoſed the diſpoſition of young men more inclinable to ſplendid negligence, than perſeverance in laborious application to acquire correctneſs; and therefore did as we do in making what is crooked ſtraight when it is bent the contrary way, in order that it may remain ſtraight at laſt.

FOR this purpoſe then, and to correct exceſs or neglect of any kind, we may here add, that it is not enough a work be learned; it muſt be pleaſing; the Painter muſt add grace to ſtrength, if he deſires to ſecure the firſt impreſſion in his favour.

THE Cartoons of Raffaelle have powers that ſtrike ſo forcibly, that the abſence of the leſſer elegancies of the Art are not perceived; we even ſometimes go greater lengths, and carry our enthuſiaſtic admiration ſo far, as to deſpiſe thoſe ornamental qualities, without conſidering perhaps ſufficiently our own imbecillity, or recollecting how few can have any title or pretenſion to ſuch neglect.

OUR taſte has a kind of ſenſuality about it, as well as a love of the ſublime; both thoſe qualities of the mind are

to

to have their proper conſequence, as far as they do not counteract each other; for that is the grand error which much care ought to be taken to avoid.

There are ſome rules, whoſe abſolute authority, like that of our nurſes, continues no longer than while we are in a ſtate of childhood. One of the firſt rules that I believe every Maſter would give to a young Pupil, reſpecting his conduct and management of light and ſhadow, for inſtance, would be what Leonardo Da Vinci has actually given, that you muſt oppoſe a light ground to the ſhadowed ſide of your Figure, and a dark ground to the light ſide. If Leonardo had lived to ſee the ſuperior ſplendor and effect which has been ſince produced by the exactly contrary conduct, joining light to light, and ſhadow to ſhadow, though without doubt he would have admired it; yet, as it ought not, ſo probably it would not be the firſt rule with which he would have begun his inſtructions.

Thus, in the artificial management of the figures, it is directed that they ſhall contraſt each other according to the rules generally given; that if one figure oppoſes his front to the ſpectator, the next figure is to have

have his back turned, and that the limbs of each individual figure be contraſted; that is, if the right leg be put forward, the right arm is to be drawn back.

It is very proper thoſe rules ſhould be given in the Academy; it is proper the young ſtudents ſhould be informed that ſome reſearch is to be made, and be habituated to conſider every excellence as reduceable to principles. Beſides, it is the natural progreſs of inſtruction to teach firſt what is obvious and perceptible to the ſenſes, and from thence proceed gradually to notions large, liberal, and compleat, ſuch as compriſe the more refined and higher excellencies in Art.

When ſtudents are more advanced, they will find that the greateſt beauties of character and expreſſion are produced without contraſt; nay more, that this contraſt would ruin and deſtroy them.

St. Paul preaching at Athens in one of the Cartoons, far from any affected academical contraſt of limbs, ſtands equally on both legs, and both hands are in the ſame attitude: add contraſt, and the whole energy and unaffected grace of the figure is deſtroyed. Elymas the Sorcerer ſtretches

ſtretches both hands forward in the ſame direction which gives perfectly the expreſſion intended.

INDEED you never will meet in the works of Ráffaelle any of thoſe ſchool-boy affected contraſts. Whatever contraſt there is, appears without any ſeeming agency of Art, by the natural chance of things.

THE contraſts, ſuch as I juſt mentioned, will ſcarce ever ſucceed except in Statues or Pictures of ſingle figures only; to them it may in a conſiderable degree be applicable; in a compoſition it will be apt to deſtroy that natural energy of men engaged in real action, unſolicitous of grace.

IT would be uſeful to a Painter to enquire into the true meaning and cauſe of rules, and how they operate on thoſe faculties to which they are addreſſed; by knowing their general purpoſe and meaning, he will often find that he need not confine himſelf to the literal ſenſe, it will be ſufficient if he preſerves the ſpirit of the Law.

IT is given as a rule, for inſtance, by Freſnoy, That *the principal Figure of a Subject muſt appear in the midſt of the*

 Picture,

Picture, under the principal light, to diſtinguiſh it from the reſt. A Painter who ſhould think himſelf obliged ſtrictly to follow this rule, would incumber himſelf with needleſs difficulties; he would be confined to great uniformity of compoſition, and be deprived of many beauties which are incompatible with its obſervance. The meaning of this rule extends, or ought to extend, no further than this—That the principal Figure ſhould be immediately diſtinguiſhed at the firſt glance of the eye; but there is no neceſſity that the principal light ſhould fall on the principal figure, or that the principal figure ſhould be in the middle of the picture. It is ſufficient that it be diſtinguiſhed by its place, or by the attention of other figures pointing it out to the ſpectator. So far is this rule from being indiſpenſable, that it is very ſeldom practiſed, other conſiderations of greater conſequence ſtanding in the way. Examples in oppoſition to this rule, are found in the Cartoons in Chriſt's Charge to Peter, the preaching of St. Paul, and Elymas the Sorcerer, who is undoubtedly the principal object in that picture. In none of thoſe compoſitions is the principal figure in the midſt of the picture. In the very admirable compoſition of the Tent of Darius, by Le Brun, Alexander is not in the middle of the picture, nor does the principal light fall on him; but the attention of all

the

the reſt immediately diſtinguiſhes him, and diſtinguiſhes him more properly; the greateſt light falls on the Daughter of Darius, who is in the middle of the picture, where it is more neceſſary the principal light ſhould be placed.

It is very extraordinary that Felibien, who has given a very minute deſcription of this picture, but indeed ſuch a deſcription as may be rather called panegyric than criticiſm, thinking it neceſſary (according to the precept of Freſnoy) that Alexander ſhould poſſeſs the principal light, has accordingly given it to him; he might with equal truth have ſaid he was placed in the middle of the picture, as he ſeemed reſolved to give this piece every kind of excellence which he conceived to be neceſſary to perfection. His generoſity is here unluckily miſapplied, as it would have deſtroyed in a great meaſure the beauty of the compoſition.

Another inſtance occurs to me where equal liberty may be taken in regard to the management of light. Tho' the general practice is to make a large maſs about the middle of the picture ſurrounded by ſhadow, the reverſe may be practiſed, and the ſpirit of the rule ſtill exiſt. Examples of this principle reverſed may be found very fre-

frequently in the works of the Venetian School. In the great compoſition of Paul Veroneſe, the Marriage at Cana, the figures are for the moſt part in half ſhadow, the great light is in the ſky; and indeed, the general effect of this Picture which is ſo ſtriking, is no more than what we often ſee in landſcapes, in ſmall pictures of fairs and country feaſts; but thoſe principles of light and ſhadow being transferred to a large ſcale, to a ſpace containing near a hundred figures as large as life, and conducted to all appearance with as much facility, and with an attention as ſteadily fixed upon *the whole together*, as if it was a ſmall picture immediately under the eye, the work juſtly excites our admiration, the difficulty being encreaſed as the extent is enlarged.

The various modes of compoſition are infinite: ſometimes they ſhall conſiſt of one large groupe in the middle of the picture, and the ſmaller groupes on each ſide; or a plain ſpace in the middle, and the groupes of figures ranged round this vacuity. Whether this principal broad light be in the middle ſpace of ground, as in the School of Athens; or in the ſky, as in the Marriage at Cana; in the Andromeda, and in moſt of the Pictures of Paul Veroneſe; or whether the light be on the groupes; whatever mode of compoſition is adopted, every variety and licence is allowable;

able; this only is indiſputably neceſſary, that to prevent the eye from being diſtracted and confuſed with a multiplicity of objects of equal magnitude, thoſe objects, whether they conſiſt of lights, ſhadows, or figures, muſt be diſpoſed in large maſſes and groupes properly varied and contraſted; that to a certain quantity of action, a proportioned ſpace of plain ground is required; that light is to be ſupported by ſufficient ſhadow; and, we may add, that a certain quantity of cold colours is neceſſary to give value and luſtre to the warm colours: what thoſe proportions are cannot be ſo well learnt by precept as by obſervation on Pictures, and in this knowledge bad Pictures will inſtruct as well as good. Our enquiry, why Pictures have a bad effect, may be as advantageous as the enquiry why they have a good effect; each will corroborate the principles that are ſuggeſted by the other.

THOUGH it is not my *buſineſs* to enter into the detail of our Art, yet I muſt take this opportunity of mentioning one of the means of producing that great effect which we obſerve in the works of the Venetian Painters, as I think it is not generally known or obſerved. It ought, in my opinion, to be indiſpenſably obſerved, that the maſſes of light in a Picture be always of a warm mellow colour,

yellow, red, or a yellowiſh-white; and that the blue, the grey, or the green colours be kept almoſt entirely out of theſe maſſes, and be uſed only to ſupport and ſet off theſe warm colours; and for this purpoſe, a ſmall proportion of cold colours will be ſufficient.

Let this conduct be reverſed, let the light be cold, and the ſurrounding colours warm, as we often ſee in the works of the Roman and Florentine Painters, and it will be out of the power of art, even in the hands of Rubens, or Titian, to make a Picture ſplendid and harmonious.

Le Brun and Carlo Maratti were two Painters of great merit, and particularly in what may be called Academical Merit, but were both deficient in this management of Colours; the want of obſerving this rule is one of the cauſes of that heavineſs of effect which is ſo obſervable in their works. The principal light in the Picture of Le Brun, which I juſt now mentioned, falls on Statira, who is dreſſed very injudiciouſly in a pale blue drapery; it is true, he has heightened this blue with gold, but that is not enough; the whole Picture has a heavy air, and by no means anſwers the expectation raiſed by the Print. Pouſſine often made a ſpot of blue drapery, when the general

hue

hue of the Picture was inclinable to brown or yellow; which ſhews ſufficiently, that harmony of colouring was not a part of the Art that had much engaged the attention of this great Painter.

The conduct of Titian in the Picture of Bacchus and Ariadne, has been much celebrated, and juſtly, for the harmony of colouring. To Ariadne is given (ſay the Critics) a red ſcarf, to relieve the figure from the ſea which is behind her. It is not for that reaſon, but for another of much greater conſequence, for the ſake of the general harmony and effect of the Picture. The figure of Ariadne is ſeparated from the great groupe, and is dreſſed in blue, which added to the colour of the ſea, make that quantity of cold colour which Titian thought neceſſary for the ſupport and brilliancy of the great groupe, which groupe is compoſed, with very little exception, entirely of mellow colours. But as the Picture in this caſe would be divided into two diſtinct parts, one half cold, and the other warm, it was neceſſary to carry ſome of the mellow colours of the great groupe, into the cold part of the Picture, and a part of the cold into the great groupe; accordingly Titian gave Ariadne a red ſcarf, and to one of the Bacchante, a little blue drapery.

THE light of the Picture, as I obſerved, ought to be of a warm colour; for though white may be uſed for the principal light, as was the practice of many of the Dutch and Flemiſh Painters, yet it is better to ſuppoſe *that white* illumined by the yellow rays of the ſetting ſun, as was the manner of Titian. The ſuperiority of which manner is never more ſtriking, than when in a Collection of Pictures we chance to ſee a Portrait of Titian's hanging by the ſide of a Flemiſh Picture, even though that ſhould be of the hand of Vandyke, which, however admirable in other reſpects, becomes cold and grey in the compariſon.

THE illumined parts of objects are in nature of a warmer tint than thoſe that are in the ſhade; what I have recommended therefore is no more, than that the ſame conduct be obſerved in the whole, which is acknowledged to be neceſſary in every individual part. It is preſenting to the eye the ſame effect as that which it has been *accuſtomed* to feel, which in this caſe, as in every other, will always produce beauty; no principle therefore in our Art can be more certain, or be derived from a higher ſource.

WHAT I juſt now mentioned of the ſuppoſed reaſon why Ariadne has part of her drapery red, gives me occaſion

ſion here to obſerve, that this favourite quality of giving objects relief, and which De Piles and all the Critics have conſidered as a requiſite of the utmoſt importance, was not one of thoſe objects which much engaged the attention of Titian: Painters of an inferior rank have far exceeded him in producing this effect. This was a great object of attention when Art was in its infant ſtate, as it is at preſent with the vulgar and ignorant, who feel the higheſt ſatisfaction in ſeeing a figure, which as they ſay, looks as if they could walk round it. But however low I may rate this pleaſure of deception, I ſhould not oppoſe it, did it not oppoſe itſelf to a quality of a much higher kind, by counteracting entirely that fullneſs of manner which is ſo difficult to expreſs in words, but which is found in ſuch perfection in the beſt works of Corregio, and we may add of Rembrant. This manner is produced by melting and loſing the ſhadows into a ground ſtill darker than thoſe ſhadows; whereas that relief is produced by oppoſing and ſeparating the ground from the figure either by light, or ſhadow, or colour. This conduct of in-laying, as it may be called, figures on their ground in order to produce relief, was the practice of the old Painters, ſuch as Andrea Mantegna, Pietro Perugino, and Albert Durer; and to theſe we may add, the firſt manner of Lionardo da Vinci-

Giorgione, and even Corregio; but theſe three were amongſt the firſt who begun to correct themſelves in this dryneſs of ſtyle, by no longer conſidering relief as a principal object. As thoſe two qualities, relief, and fullneſs of effect, can hardly exiſt together, it is not very difficult to determine to which we ought to give the preference.

As I have obſerved, an Artiſt is obliged for ever to hold a balance in his hand, by which he muſt determine the value of different qualities, that when *ſome* fault muſt be committed, he may chooſe the leaſt. Thoſe Painters who have beſt underſtood the Art of producing a good effect, have adopted one principle that ſeems perfectly conformable to reaſon, that a part may be ſacrificed for the good of the whole. Thus, whether the maſſes conſiſt of light or ſhadow, it is neceſſary that they ſhould be compact and of a pleaſing ſhape; to this end, ſome parts may be made darker and ſome lighter, and reflections ſtronger than nature would warrant. Paul Veroneſe took great liberties of this kind. It is ſaid, that being once aſked, why certain figures were painted in ſhade, as no cauſe was ſeen in the Picture itſelf? he turn'd off their enquiry by anſwering, *una nuevola che paſſa*, a cloud is paſſing which has overſhadowed it.

But I cannot give a better inſtance of this practice than in a Picture which I have of Rubens; it is a repreſentation of a Moon-light. Rubens has not only diffuſed more light over the Picture than is in nature, but has beſtowed on it thoſe warm glowing colours by which his Works are ſo much diſtinguiſhed. It is ſo unlike what any other Painters have given us of Moon-light, that it might be eaſily miſtaken, if he had not likewiſe added Stars, for a fainter ſetting Sun.—Rubens thought the eye ought to be ſatisfied in this caſe, above all other conſiderations; he might indeed have made it more natural, but it would have been at the expence of what he thought of much greater conſequence---the harmony proceeding from the contraſt and variety of colours. This ſame Picture will furniſh us with another inſtance, where we muſt depart from nature for a greater advantage.

The Moon in this Picture does not preſerve ſo great a ſuperiority in regard to its lightneſs over the object which it illumines, as it does in nature; this is likewiſe an intended deviation, and for the ſame reaſon. If Rubens had preſerved the ſame ſcale of gradation of light between the Moon and the objects as is in nature, the Picture muſt have conſiſted of one ſmall ſpot of light only, and at a ſmall

diſtance

diſtance from the Picture nothing but this ſpot would be ſeen. It may be ſaid indeed, that this being the caſe, it is a ſubject that ought not to be painted: but then, for the ſame reaſon, armour, nor any thing ſhining, ought ever to be painted; for tho' pure white is uſed in order to repreſent the greateſt light of ſhining objects, it will not in the picture preſerve the ſame ſuperiority over fleſh, as it has in nature, without keeping that fleſh colour of a very low tint. Rembrant, who thought it of more conſequence to paint light, than the objects that are ſeen by it, has done this in a picture which I have of Achilles. The head is kept down to a very low tint, in order to preſerve this due gradation and diſtinction between the armour and the face. The conſequence of which is, that upon the whole the picture is too black;---ſurely too much is ſacrificed here to this narrow conception of nature, allowing the contrary conduct a fault, yet it muſt be acknowledged a leſs fault than making a picture ſo dark as cannot be ſeen without a peculiar light, and then with difficulty. The merit or demerit of the different conduct of Rubens and Rembrant in thoſe inſtances which I have given, are not to be determined by the narrow principles of nature, ſeparated from its effect on the human mind. Reaſon and common ſenſe tell us, that before, and above all other con-

conſiderations it is neceſſary, that the work ſhould be ſeen, not only without difficulty or inconvenience, but with pleaſure and ſatisfaction, and every obſtacle which ſtands in the way of this pleaſure and convenience muſt be removed.

THE tendency of this Diſcourſe, with the inſtances which have been given, is not ſo much to place the Artiſt above rules, as to teach him their reaſon; to prevent him from entertaining a narrow confined conception of Art; to clear his mind from a perplexed variety of rules and their exceptions, by recommending the attention of the Artiſt to an acquaintance with the paſſions and affections of the mind, from which all rules ariſe, and to which they are all referable. Art effects its purpoſe by their means; an intimate knowledge therefore of thoſe paſſions and affections is neceſſary to him who deſires to effect them upon ſure and ſolid principles.

A COMPLEAT eſſay or enquiry into the connection between the rules of Art, and the eternal and immutable diſpoſitions of our paſſions, would be indeed going at once to the foundation of Criticiſm; but I am too well convinced what extenſive knowledge, what ſubtle and penetrating

judgment would be required to engage in ſuch an undertaking: it is enough for me, if, in the language of Painters, I have produced a ſlight ſketch of a part of this vaſt compoſition, but that ſufficiently diſtinct to ſhew the uſefulneſs of ſuch a Theory, and its practicability.

Before I conclude, I cannot avoid making one obſervation on the Pictures now before us. I have obſerved, that every candidate has copied the celebrated invention of Timanthes in hiding the face of Agamemnon in his mantle; indeed ſuch laviſh encomiums have been beſtowed on this thought, and that too by men of the higheſt character in critical knowledge---- Cicero, Quintilian, Valerius Maximus, and Pliny,--- and ſince re-echoed by almoſt every modern that has wrote on the Arts, that your adopting it can neither be wondered at nor blamed. Indeed it appears now to be ſo much connected with the ſubject, that the ſpectator would be diſappointed in not finding united in the Picture what he always united in his mind, and conſidered as indiſpenſably belonging to the ſubject. But it may be obſerved, that thoſe who praiſe this circumſtance were not Painters. They uſe it as an illuſtration only of their own Art; it ſerved their purpoſe, and it was certainly not their buſineſs

to

to enter into the objections that lye againſt it in another Art.

I FEAR we have but very ſcanty means of exciting thoſe powers over the imagination which make ſo very conſiderable and refined a part of Poetry. It is a doubt with me, whether they ſhould be even attempted. The chief, if not the only occaſion which the Painter has for this artifice, is, when the ſubject is improper to be more fully repreſented, either for the ſake of decency, or to avoid what would be diſagreeable to be ſeen; and this is not to raiſe or encreaſe the paſſions, which is the reaſon that is given for this practice, but on the contrary to diminiſh their effect.

IT is true ſketches, or ſuch drawings as Painters generally make for their works, give this pleaſure of imagination to a high degree. From a ſlight undetermined drawing, where the idea of the compoſition and character are, as I may ſay, only juſt touched upon, the imagination ſupplies more than the Painter himſelf, probably, could produce, and we accordingly often find, that the finiſhed work diſappoints the expectation that was raiſed from the ſketch; and this power is one of the

the cauſes of the great pleaſure we have in viewing a collection of drawings of great Painters. Theſe general ideas, which are expreſſed in ſketches, correſpond very well to the Art in Poetry. A great part of the beauty of the celebrated deſcription of Eve in Milton's Paradiſe Loſt, conſiſts in uſing only general indiſtinct expreſſions, every man making out the detail according to his own particular imagination, his own idea of beauty, grace, expreſſion, dignity, or lovelineſs; but a Painter, when he repreſents Eve on a canvas, is obliged to give a determined form, and his own idea of beauty diſtinctly expreſſed.

We cannot on this occaſion, nor indeed in any other, recommend an undetermined manner, or vague ideas of any kind, in a compleat and finiſhed Picture. This idea, therefore, of leaving any thing to the imagination, oppoſes a very fixed and indiſpenſable rule in our Art, that every thing ſhall be carefully and diſtinctly expreſſed, as if the Painter knew, with correctneſs and preciſion, the exact form and character of whatever is introduced into the Picture. This is what with us is called Science, and Learning, which muſt not be ſacrificed and given up for a beauty ſo uncertain and doubtful, which not naturally belonging to our Art, will probably be ſought for without ſucceſs.

Mr. Falconet has obſerved, in a note on this paſſage in his tranſlation of Pliny, that the circumſtance of covering the face of Agamemnon was probably not in conſequence of any fine imagination of the Painter; this he conſiders as a diſcovery of the critics; but that he merely copied the deſcription of the ſacrifice, as he found it in Euripides.

The words from which the Picture is ſuppoſed to be taken, are theſe: *Agamemnon ſaw Iphigenia advance towards the fatal altar; he groaned, he turned aſide his head, he ſhed tears, and covered his face with his robe.*

Falconet does not at all acquieſce in the praiſe that is beſtowed on Timanthes; not only becauſe it is not his invention, but becauſe he thinks meanly of this trick of concealing, except in inſtances of blood, where the objects would be too horrible to be ſeen; but, ſays he, in an afflicted Father, in a King, in Agamemnon, you, who are a Painter, conceal from me the moſt intereſting circumſtance, and then put me off with ſophiſtry and a veil. You, ſays he, are a feeble Painter, without reſources; you don't know even thoſe of your Art: I care not what veil it is, whether cloſed hands, arms raiſed,

or whatever action that conceals from me the countenance of the Hero. You think of veiling Agamemnon; you have unveiled your own ignorance. A Painter, says he, who represents Agamemnon veiled, is as ridiculous as a Poet would be, who, in a pathetic situation, in order to satisfy my expectations, and rid himself of the business, should say, that the sentiments of his Hero are so far above whatever can be said on the occasion, that he shall say nothing.

To what Falconet has said, we may add, that supposing this method of leaving the expression of grief to the imagination, to be, as it was thought to be, the invention of the Painter, and that it deserves all the praise that has been given it, still it is a trick that will serve but once; whoever does it a second time, will not only want novelty, but be justly suspected of using artifice to evade difficulties. If difficulties overcome, make a great part of the merit of Art, difficulties evaded can deserve but little commendation.

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